

VZCZCXRO9329

OO RUEHBZ RUEHDU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHKI #0516/01 1541211
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 031211Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9663
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KINSHASA 000516

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [KPKO](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - JUNE 3

¶1. (U) The information contained in this report consists principally of spot reports from various sources. This cable is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

Anti-LRA Operations

¶2. (SBU) The FARDC has deployed additional troops to Banda in Haut Uele District following a series of small-scale LRA attacks in the past week. There are reportedly 6000 FARDC troops in Haut Uele, and the GDRC intends to deploy another 2000 soldiers.

¶3. (U) The World Food Program noted that insecurity and bad road conditions are hampering delivery of food assistance to LRA-affected areas in Haut-Uele. Recently, a convoy of humanitarian assistance (seven trucks with food and four trucks with non-food items) took more than 40 days to travel from Beni to Dungu.

Security Situation in Ituri

¶4. (SBU) In northeastern Ituri District, 40 prisoners, who escaped from the Aru prison, remain at large. The escape was reportedly staged following the death of a prisoner from starvation. (Comment: Prisoners often depend on family and friends for food, and deaths from starvation are not unusual. End comment.)

¶5. (SBU) MONUC announced that 30-35 troops from an FRPI splinter group surrendered to FARDC units in Bolenzabo in northern Ituri. MONUC cautioned, however, that final numbers are not yet verified. Civilians displaced by FARDC advances against the FPRI and FPJC rebels are returning to homes around Marabo, north of Tchey.

Security Situation in the Kivus

¶6. (SBU) Armed men ambushed an escorted World Food Program convoy near Kalembe, near Pinga in North Kivu. Casualties are not yet known. The area is considered an FDLR stronghold.

¶7. (SBU) FDLR cadre attacked FARDC troops on the Bukavu-Mwenga axis in South Kivu on June 1 at three different points -- Mwenga, Kasika and Sungwe. In a coordinated action, the attackers burned dozens of houses and looted some 50 homes and several shops. At least one FARDC soldier and three civilians were killed. The FDLR assembled approximately 200 troops in Bulinga, just north of Mwenga, on May 30 before launching the strikes. MONUC reportedly responded to the attack, but did not directly engage the FDLR. MONUC analysts believe the large coordinated attacks are designed to demoralize the FARDC and deter them from launching Operation Kimia II in the mine-rich area. FARDC and FDLR forces have long cooperated in exploiting the local mines, but MONUC has brought in over 2000 FARDC troops trained for Kimia II who have no connections to local FDLR commanders.

¶ 8. (U) Radio Okapi reports that Michel Rukunda Makanika, commander of the Minembwe-based rebel group FRF ("Forces Republicaines Federalistes" in French) said the group will not change its position on refusing to demobilize, unless the GDRC addresses FRF concerns, notably the return of refugees, community development, and local security in the Minembwe area. Rukunda spoke to MONUC, UNDP, and IOM delegates who were visiting Kamombo and Minembwe yesterday as part of the Amani process.

MONUC Training and Operational Command

¶ 9. (SBU) MONUC has launched "mentoring" programs with the FARDC in Kanyabayondo, Bunyakiri, Uvira and Shabunda. The programs, involving 550 FARDC troops to date, focus on critical elements of discipline, including the need to refrain from civilian abuses. (Comment: While small, the program may be able to demonstrate that training can take place alongside operations, an approach resisted so far by the FARDC leadership. End comment.)

¶ 10. (SBU) MONUC will try to improve its own command and control with a more systematic distribution of information between North and South Kivu brigades. Deputy Chief of Staff Colonel Guy Deacon lamented the poor level of coordination during a recent visit to Walikale. He will also implement a duty officer system, which MONUC Headquarters lacks at present.

CNDP Objectives

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¶ 11. (SBU) Alpha Sow, Chief Political Advisor to MONUC Goma, said the CNDP leadership voiced two primary short-term objectives: the release of CNDP political prisoners, and treatment and support for wounded CNDP cadre. Both objectives should be achievable, as political prisoners number "in the tens" and the wounded number about 200.

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